



March 18, 2013

Honorable Rob Bishop  
123 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515  
[Fred.Ferguson@mail.house.gov](mailto:Fred.Ferguson@mail.house.gov)

Dear Representative Bishop,

The Utah Environmental Congress (UEC) is pleased by your office's invitation by telephone last week to provide a list of our priority land designations, including Wilderness, for eastern Utah. We look forward to playing a useful and productive role in this endeavor. We believe that legislative efforts such as this new endeavor can be durable and successful for all interested parties as long as everyone has complete information and a genuine desire to protect Utah's most important natural environments and communities.

The UEC has been involved in Forest Service issues in Utah for over 14 years. We are the only statewide forest advocacy group and we are recognized as the leader on Forest Service issues in Utah. Our expertise and interest is focused on designations on National Forest lands. We were the first group to prepare a statewide inventory of Forest Service roadless (aka potential wilderness) areas, and our wilderness proposal remains today the most comprehensive and accurate. Our wilderness proposal is backed by over 5 years of full time research and some 90,000 geo-referenced photo points. In the course of directing that I became intimately familiar with the proposed wilderness areas on the National Forests in Carbon, Duchesne, Emery, Grand, San Juan, and Uintah Counties. Importantly, this includes researched and nuanced understanding of available options for crafting ideal boundaries to satisfy needs while avoiding possible conflicts. I look forward to adding constructively to this process.

We are currently working with other National Forest advocates in Utah to update our proposal. This is in light of the new Fishlake N.F. Motorized Travel Plan, newer more accurate computerized air photos, and collaboration with Tim Peterson of Grand Canyon Trust. The product is one Unified National Forest Wilderness Proposal. This has already been completed for all National Forest lands in San Juan, Grand, and Emery Counties. This proposal is the basis for our wilderness priorities in eastern Utah and a useful starting point for discussion of those issues. I look forward to sharing this in detail with you and the Counties soon.

We have prepared some detailed presentations of our Unified proposal as well as detailed options in past County-level processes, such as in San Juan. I respectfully ask that you please consider extending the opportunity to UEC and all other interested parties to collaboratively share and exchange such more detailed presentations/overviews in an initial meeting or meetings indoors. The UEC believes, however, that simply looking at maps and documents indoors is not the best way to resolve the complex interrelations of the many potential designations, and

inevitable site-specific boundary calls. We have found that there is no substitute for, together, visiting the proposed wilderness areas and other proposed designation areas in order to collaboratively understand their unique wilderness qualities and the reasons why boundaries are placed where they are. We realize that the process of meeting with diverse groups to assess their priorities, determining areas of agreement, and visiting proposed wilderness areas to help in resolving those disagreements will take commitment of time and collaborative energy. But the UEC believes that if the bill is to be durable and actually (finally) move us past the land management challenges of the past that is the only formula that will work. Perhaps that initial collaborative exchange and sharing of proposals, priorities and options may serve as prelude to scheduling field trips to specific priority regions this upcoming field season. I've found field time is usually best spent collaboratively visiting areas where parties have not yet nailed down the path to agreement. As there's not enough time to go everywhere in one field season, an approach to this is that each site visit is pre-selected to serve as proxy for several other areas with the exact same issue.

There is uncertainty regarding what exactly is meant by 'eastern Utah.' With that in mind, and the advice proffered by Fred Ferguson over the telephone last week, we offer the following priorities:

### **Greater Canyonlands-Sky Island Region**

Counties involved: Grand and Jan Juan.

- Proposed Forest Service Wilderness areas associated with Elk Ridge, Chippean Rocks/Chippean Ridge, and the Abajo Mountains proper, which are due south of Canyonlands N.P. Another high priority is the proposed Forest Service Wilderness areas in the La Sal Mountains east of Moab.
  - This involves the Moab and Monticello Ranger Districts on the Manti-La Sal National Forest

### **Waterpocket Fold/Capitol Reef Headwaters Region**

Counties involved: Wayne.

- Proposed National Forest Wilderness areas involved with the forested headwaters of Waterpocket Fold and Capitol Reef N.P., such as the 1000 Lakes Mountain and Wayne Wonderland proposed Wilderness areas.
  - UEC and Grand Canyon Trust have also explored options for an alternative Congressional Designation for portions of the Chippean Rocks and Elk Ridge high country.
- Minor portions of the Boulder Mountain and Happy Valley proposed Wilderness areas (south of Torrey) are also in Wayne County. But from our telephone conversation last week I'm working on the impression this is not being considered within your Office's geographic scope for this process.

**San Rafael Swell and Book Cliffs Region**

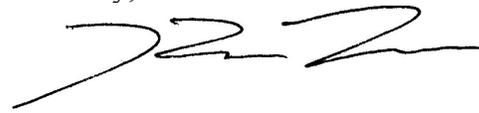
Counties involved: Emery, Carbon, Grand, and possibly Duchesne and Uintah.

- The portions of the several proposed National Forest Wilderness areas on the eastern escarpment of the Wasatch Plateau, located on the west side of Emery and Carbon Counties
- The proposed National Forest Wilderness areas in the “South Unit” of the Ashley National Forest. This is in Duchesne County, and it is uncertain on our end if this is inside of or way outside of the geographic scope you envision.

We understand from our telephone conversation last week that the Uinta Mountains are being considered outside the scope of this process. If that were to change, UEC would like an opportunity to share our priorities for that awesome mountain range, the center of which one finds a circa million-acre roadless area spanning three National Forests.

Thank you again for involving the Utah Environmental Congress in this process of designating wilderness and other designations in eastern Utah. We look forward to meeting with your staff and the many interested parties. We are honored by your invitation last week and look forward to working with you in protecting these priceless natural areas and communities in our state.

Sincerely,



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Kevin Mueller  
Program Director  
Utah Environmental Congress